The Memoirs of a Swine in the Land of Kultur

OR, HOW IT FELT TO BE A PRISONER OF WAR

By BEN MUSE

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The Author and an English Fellow-Prisoner, from Photograph Taken Three Months Before the Armistice. The Author is Wearing an Old French Uniform With Which he was Fitted Out After Running Away and Losing his Regulation Prison Costume

The MEMOIRS OF A SWINE IN THE LAND OF KULTUR

OR

HOW IT FELT TO BE A PRISONER OF WAR

By BEN MUSE

36926 Lance-Corporal 11th King's Royal Rifles

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PREFACE

The following narrative tells of the adventures of an American boy in German imprisonment from his capture November 30, 1917, to his release December 9, 1918. The author is a native of Durham, N. C., and a student of Trinity College, who went over and joined the English forces before America's entry into the war, serving in the Eleventh King's Royal Rifles six months and going through the severe fighting around Ypres and Cambrai before his capture.

1918

The Memoirs of a Swine in the Land of Kultur
or, How it Felt to be a Prisoner of War

CHAPTER I

Capture

I was bandaging poor Sergeant Sharpy's wounds.

"It's all up with us, Muse," he said.

I feared that it was all up with *him,* at any rate, as I clumsily tried to stop the torrent of blood which was flowing from his head and shoulders.

It was after an hour of one of those hells such as only soldiers of the line can understand, when death and suffering were everywhere and survival seemed the rare and lucky exception. The machine gun corporal on my left had died at his gun, and the contorted body of my good old mate, "Wally," blocked the view farther down the trench. On my right the three survivors of my section were still firing furiously over the parapet.

Personally I had not suffered from the barrage beyond the interruption of my preparation for breakfast. The biscuits and jam and chocolate lay spread on the edge of my "hole," and the canteen of tea-water over my boot-dubbin fire steadily refused to boil. I left the wounded sergeant to look over the top. The mass of running grey uniforms was now very near us. I could see the flags which they carried and hear the roar of "Hurrahs" between the bursting of shells.

But who were those brown, unarmed figures running over on our left? My God! They were our own chaps—already captured! I glanced quickly around. The Germans were at our rear! The little hill behind us was dotted with the grey figures, and those flags could be seen in every direction.

"They're all around——," but ere I could finish they were on us. A shower of hand grenades and then "Fritz" himself.

"Hurra! Hurra! 'Raus! 'Raus!" and shaking with excitement they shoved their bayonets in my face.

I laid down my rifle and began undoing my equipment.

I helped the sergeant over the top, snatched up a bag of biscuits, took a last fond look at my tea-water—now beginning to boil!—and scrambled over after him.

CHAPTER II

In Conquered France

The journey to our camp in Germany will be remembered by most of my comrades only as a hungry nightmare, interrupted at long intervals by bowls of unsatisfying German soup. Those of us who had enough biscuits to keep from suffering found it an interesting opportunity to see the Germans behind their lines and the life of the French under German rule.

The latter were splendid to us. In every town or village through which we passed, they turned out in crowds to do us honor. Girls smiled sympathetically and old women cried. Cheering was, of course, *verboten.*

In one small village an old French gentleman came out into the street and raised his tall silk hat to us. Instinctively the boys in the front of our column responded with a salute, and their example was followed by each section of fours in its turn, as they marched past. Three or four German officers came up, cursing and shaking their fists to drive the old man away, but he remained defiantly bare-headed and motionless until the last of his country's allies had filed past.

The French would gladly have relieved our hunger, too, from their own slim stores, had it been possible. As it was they smuggled food to us at every opportunity. The front files often found loaves of bread and sandwiches on the sidewalks, placed there hurriedly by the French women on seeing us coming. Bits of food as well as warm caps and sometimes jackets were thrown down to us from the second story windows. French girls ran out of their houses to bring us food and drink, in laughing defiance of cursing *Landsturmers*—and dashed away again.

It was everywhere evident that, for all our unwashed faces and muddy and ragged uniforms we were, after all, their friends, and those other flashy soldiers who swaggered about their streets and into their shops and homes, were their eternal enemies.

One of the pictures from that journey which remains clearest in my memory is that of the second night of captivity, standing before the Cathedral of Le Quesnoy. The edifice loomed beautiful before us in the mellow moonlight and reflected a feeling of peace and reverence in us warriors fresh from the trenches. Three women, dressed in black, came out of the door just as the front of our column marched into the yard. They stopped, horror-struck, when they saw us there. Would they quarter us in the Cathedral? One of them hurried away to find the *curé*. The other two approached the officer in charge of us and protested in French. Barking out words of brutal German and pushing the ladies aside, the officer walked on toward the door.

The first lady had now returned with the reverend father. Very calmly he attempted to prevent this desecration, but the only result was to exhaust the patience of the vandal officer. Finally he seized the *curé* by the shoulders and pushed him down the steps. Then, turning to the prisoners:

"Marsch!" he rasped.

The *curé* bowed his head and walked away, followed by the three weeping ladies and the hordes of prisoners and guards crowded slowly into the Cathedral.

CHAPTER III

Beggars

A prisoner of war camp had many characteristics in common with other communities of human beings. It had its social classes, its great and its humble citizens, its rich and its poor. In arriving in camp I was fortunate enough to meet a friend, a Frenchman, with three years service in captivity and an ample stock of provisions. He "adopted" me. The fate of my eight hundred comrades, however, was pitiful. Finding practically nothing in the Help Committee's stores and being as yet without help from England, they were forced to subsist on the German ration which was scarcely enough to keep a man on his feet. The usual results of hunger set in, and I saw these poor fellows sink into shabby, hungry, begging wanderers about the camp.

My friend M——— was one of the most important men in the camp. He was intimate with all the bureau clerks, *Unteroffiziere,* interpreters, "good" sentries, and other persons worth knowing. He lived with three French *sous-officers* in a comfortably furnished or "fixed up" *Kleines Zimmer,* They had everything that friends could send them in parcels, and wanted for nothing but liberty and—happiness.

I had just finished a good breakfast of bacon and toast and cocoa, prepared by the Italian "batman" and was standing before the windows enjoying a cigar with M———. The door was bolted against beggars who knocked incessantly from early morning till late at night.

I heard a shuffling outside and a timid tapping on the door. a pause and another tap; a longer pause, and then a shuffling away.

"*Un italien,*" observed M———, still gazing out the window. Another visitor walked up, thumped once on the door, and walked away again, almost without pausing.

"*Un anglais.* You can always tell."

"Rotten cigars," he continued, dismissing the subject of

the poor fellows who had gone away from the door, "but you'll have a chance to try a real one when Louis comes in. He has a box of Perfectos stuck away somewhere. What? Still worrying about our unadmitted visitors?"

I was. I was wondering if that last chap was one of my battalion. How could M——— take it so coolly?

"If you stay long in the camps," he went on sagely, "you'll learn that you can't afford to weep everytime you see a hungry man. We wept for ourselves in 1914, and afterwards we wept a lot for other chaps, but when one's been in the midst of suffering men for three years, one learns to keep from thinking about it—or else one would go mad. We give them what we can spare and then try to think of something else."

CHAPTER IV

La Glorieuse Armeé Britannique

The scene on which we gazed through the window was a typical one for a prison camp. The path along the barbed wire formed a sort of wretched promenade along which the sufficiently nourished took their constitutionals. A few English sergeants, two bearded French *ajutants,* and a group of vivacious young Russian *officiers aspirants* were pacing monotonously back and forth as one does on board ship.

"Pane![1] *Pane, Kamarad!"*

A few Italians had suddenly appeared from across the corner. I was astonished at their youth. Two of them were but children with blue eyes and pretty girlish faces.

"Fourteen years old, the one with the handkerchief around his neck," explained M——. "The other is fifteen. They were claimed to have been helping the Italian Army and so were brought here along with the soldiers."

"Pane! Brot!"[2] they persisted. I chucked them a handful of biscuits.

"No! No!" remonstrated M——. "You'll fetch the whole tribe of them."

His words were not long in coming true. A few stray Italians had seen the incident and were already coming for their share.

"Pane! Pane! Buono compagno![3] *Pane!"*

A crowd quickly gathered around the window.

"Allez! Allez! Macaroni, Garibaldi, Sacramento, allez!" and he tried vainly to wave them back.

"Pane, pane!" They were reaching their arms through the windows now. The Frenchman pushed their arms back and closed the window.

Presently another rabble appeared, a working party of two or three hundred starving men, urged on by cursing sentries.

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[1] Italian: Bread.
[2] German: Bread.
[3] Italian: Good comrade.

Slowly and listlessly they straggled by, hobbling painfully, most of them in their wooden "clogs." (Boots and puttees had long gone for food.) Many of them were of my battalion and company, but they were so altered that it took a moment's study to recognize them. There was the smart young battalion clerk, a well-paid accountant in civilian life, plodding along like a broken old man, with a full beard and a shabby costume of German and Russian cast-off clothes. There was "Smiley," the company barber, never known to be out of humor. The smile still lingered on his pale features, but his jokes were lost on his saddened comrades. All had the hopeless, dejected look of constantly hungry men.

We watched the poor fellows until the last of the "rear guard" had hobbled past.

"La glorieuse Armée Britannique!" observed M——. I looked to see if he was smiling; but he wasn't. He meant no sarcasm.

I will leave the first wretched months of captivity—which I like neither to remember nor to recall to other erstwhile *Gefangener*—for that simple, more tolerable life which most of us found on the German farms.

It was the night after my first day's work on a farm, way up in the village of Kossebade, Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg. I lay nestled in a soft feather bed, for the first time in many months, thinking over the events of the past month and summing up the extent of my good luck.

I had found the people of the household, at first hand, to be reasonable creatures and I couldn't grumble at the hardness of the work. I was particularly astonished at the five meals of substantial food a day!

I thought, too, of the men captured with me and how much worse they must be faring. Three hundred of them, I knew, had gone to Lille to work behind the German line. I had stood at the camp gate to bid them boodbye as they marched away, for I knew them almost to a man. Poor fellows, still without help from England, they hobbled away in their rags and "clogs," and tattered uniforms (in the middle of January)

with their three slices of bread *for a two days' journey,* in one hand.

But could I believe my ears! They were singing!—for Tommy always sings when breaking camp—"Here We Are, Here We Are, Here We Are Again," it was, and they sang it right lustily.

I thought less painfully of the comrades which I had left in my last camp—my room-mates, Fred, Charley and Jack. I wondered if Jack was still "cleaning up" at pontoon, if Fred was getting his parcels again, and if Charley was still making those famous "burgoo" puddings.

At last my thoughts drifted inevitably across the sea and home, and I dreamt of home afterward. Indeed, the next morning I could not tell where my thoughts had left off and my dream had begun.

CHAPTER V

My First Hardship

There were two girls on the place, Miga, the farmer's daughter, and Erna, the milkmaid. The latter, a big, muscular, typically German peasant girl, took it upon herself to be my special guardian and tutor in the art of agriculture, and came to play no less a part in my life than that of my Woman of Destiny and Chief Tormentor.

Of course, I had told the *Unteroffizier*[4] that I could farm—for farming was certainly better than mining or munitions making—but, as a matter of fact, beyond the items that horses ate hay and cows gave milk, and a general hazy idea that there was a lot of digging attached to it, I knew nothing about it.

So my tutor had plenty to do—and she did it quite thoroughly. Aside from her formidable physique, she had a tone of command which could but strike awe in a new and unsophisticated *Gefangener*.

My greenness she found most uproariously funny, and she gave me every opportunity to exhibit it. I was put on all of those delightful tasks which are especially reserved for greenhorns, such as chasing the pigs, leading the cows to the village bull, putting the halter on an uncatchable colt in the pasture, or lifting a board which was nailed down.

But I made display of enough of my ignorance without these special inducements. One day I think I made a blunder of quite everything which was given me to do. Besides such minor offences as putting the wrong harness on the horse and tying the cows in the wrong stalls, I spilled a sack of oats, broke a window-pane in the barn and buried a young turkey beneath a fork-full of manure—all in one day! At first Erna scolded sharply, but finding me quite hopeless, she seemed finally to give me up and simply trust to luck that I would leave the house standing and some of the stock alive at the

[4] German non-commissioned officer.

end of this "perfect day." She did, however, regard me with such a horribly disgusted look that, had I not been so "fed up" and disgusted myself, I would have had grave misgivings for my future.

At all events I was convinced that after the failure I had made of the day's work, they would not call me in for supper that evening. Indeed, I would fain have gone to rest without that unearned repast. It didn't matter what I did or what they said, I told myself, they were only Germans, and I wasn't hungry anyhow. With this intent I was walking shamefacedly through the kitchen to my cell when Erna swept in.

"Where are you going?" she demanded, seizing me by the collar. "Supper!" she roared, as she pulled me into the dining room.

The family had already eaten, so I was left to eat with my tormentor. The table was spread for the first time with a white table-cloth, for they had evidently had guests. She sat down directly opposite me, and only once was the silence broken.

"Don't soil the table-cloth," she commanded, pointing threateningly with her fork.

It stirred my blood a bit to think of this creature lecturing me on table-manners.

"I've eaten off more white table-cloths than you," I retorted bravely, fumbling at my fork in defence.

She took this sally with contemptuous silence, which continued, with dark and threatening glances until we finished supper. She finished first. There was a dreadful pause, then she got up and sat down beside me!

I watched her with suspicious alarm. I moved a few inches along the bench and fumbled again at my fork. Then it came—all of a sudden. She threw her arms around me and kissed me!

"You poor little English fool!" she said.

CHAPTER VI

The Day of Rest

Sunday came and I was overjoyed to learn that it was observed even in Germany. I was feeding the cows when they told me the good news. I finished feeding them with enough haste to give them three kinds of indigestion and ran over to the next farm to see my mate, Albert, who had come to the village along with me. I located him by the strains of "Carry Me Back to Dear Old Blighty!" played on a mouth harmonica, and coming from the little room adjoining the cow stall. We greeted each other as though we had been separated for years.

"Well, old boy, what do you think of it?" I asked.

"All right, but blooming lonesome. Say, what would you have said to a bloke in '14 if he had told you you'd be a farmer's boy in Mecklenburg, Germany, today?"

"I'd have said he was mad," I said laughing. "But I expect we are lucky. It's better than digging trenches or making munitions for Fritz. Say, how's your grub? I can't go their black bread, can you?"

"No, it's like eating straw, but they say we'll get used to it. Did you notice them eating jam on the meat and prunes with the spuds?"

"Yes. Mad beggars, aren't they?"

I thought of the two cigarettes which I had saved for us to smoke together and pulled them out. He grabbed one of them like a drowning man grabs a life-preserver, and lit it.

"Here's a cigar for you," he said. "Cut it up and smoke it in your pipe. I can't go them. The boss gave it to me last night. He is the mayor of the village, you know, sort of a toff. Came in the stall, queer like, and says, '*Krieg*'—that means *war*, don't it?—'*Krieg, nicht gut,* Albert,' and he gives me this. '*Rauchen,*'[5] he says. I think he must have been drunk."

[5] Smoke.

Group of English Prisoners Working on the Farms of Kossebade. The Author has a Pipe in his Mouth, and Albert, Mentioned in Chapter VI, Stands at his Right

I told him about my own adventures, and we laughed together. He had fared somewhat similarly, but he was a trained farmer and he got along more smoothly with the work.

"I wonder what the boys in the bat would say if they could see me wringing out shirts with Gretchen!" he said laughing.

"Or me sawing wood with Erna!" I added.

"Al-l-bert! Al-l-bert!" came a voice from the house.

"Well, that's breakfast," said Albert. "I'll be going in. Isn't it a game, eh?"

"Aye," I agreed, "Ain't it a game! So long!"

"So long. See you after!"

After breakfast we went out for a walk and visited the other prisoners in the village, especially the three other Englishmen, and the two old Frenchmen who had been in the village since '14. The five Serbians formed a little group of their own and the Russians, some thirty-five in number, formed another. The latter had one Sunday pastime, *Einundzwanzig*. Month in and month out, some of them for two, three and four years, they followed this monotonous existence—six days of work and one of cards.

From that day until the armistice, we seven Englishmen and French were fast friends, and every Sunday found us together. In the tavern, by the village pond, or seated on the manger in some cow stall, we talked and laughed and sang and longed for the Day of Deliverance to come.

CHAPTER VII

The Conquest of Erna

As time went on I grew more adept as a farmer and bolder as my increased efficiency justified. Even Erna ceased to terrorize me. The latter relief dated from one morning in the cow stall when she exasperated me beyond all patience by her sneering denunciation of the "English swine." I answered her as neatly as I could, but my broken German only seemed to her the funnier, the more excited I became. It reached a climax when she punctuated her argument by poking me in the face with the broom. I struck out blindly and hit her somewhere, for she fell screaming to the floor. I noted with satisfaction that I had given her a respectable clout on the nose. The skin was all broken, and presently it began to bleed. The blood frightened her into silence, and from the terrified way in which she stared at me, I believe she thought she was murdered. Indeed, I had some tremors myself, and we were mutually pleased when she showed strength enough to get up on her feet. She walked feebly through the barn to the backyard to let her nose bleed.

I sprinkled some sand over the blood on the floor in the meantime, and presently the little boy who worked on the place came in.

"I think you've killed her," he observed solemnly, regarding me as one would a murderer waiting for execution. "She's bled about a liter! They'll hang you!"

Not particularly reassured by this cheering prediction, I paced back and forth in the stall, meditating on the consequences of the deed. If I must go to the gallows, I resolved to do it like a Sydney Carton or a Nathan Hale. I was trying to think of the German for "I regret only that I have but one life to give for my country," when I heard the familiar yell:

"Frühstück-k-k!" That was breakfast. I went in, but no Erna appeared. I didn't see her all day long. Heavens! I thought, she hasn't vanished altogether?

At last, at the supper table, I was put at ease. There, behind a huge plaster, I saw the face of my old tormentor again, tearful and subdued; but, thank God, alive!

They did nothing to me for mashing Erna's nose. I explained it to the sentry with a self-defence touch, and, *as he did not like Erna himself,* he let me off with a reprimand and the usual admonition:

"Don't forget that you're a *Gefangener!*"

I learned from this affair that, aside from the protection which a passing knowledge of German gave me, one could take a great many liberties with these simple country people, if one only made a bold face of it. On the other hand, the more one submitted to, the more one had to endure. I knew an Italian who had to work almost every Sunday, simply because he consented to work the first Sunday. I also knew of several Russians who were imprisoned in pig-stalls and others who were kicked and cuffed and slashed with knives by the same sentries who guarded us and for smaller offenses than we were constantly committing, but—until my attempted escape—none of the Englishmen there were touched.

CHAPTER VIII

For the Name of Old England

The one great pastime of the Mecklenburg peasants was arguing about the war with the prisoners. For us, it was impossible to avoid it. We were placed there for the amusement of the natives as well as for toil, and neither the utter ignorance of the subject on the part of the German nor the ignorance of the native tongue on the part of the prisoner furnished any immunity.

"England, nicht gut!" or *"England kaput!"*[6] was the usual challenge.

New prisoners often found their rebuttal limited to a simple, but vigorous, "Nay, nay, nay!"[7]

Older prisoners with a greater flow of language would gallantly defend the name of old England in a tirade similar to the following:

"Deutschland kaput! England nicht kaput! England besser! Ja! Ja! Englische Soldaten kommen immer fester! Passe mal auf. Immer fester!"

At first I tried serious argument, but this fell on barren ground. They knew no facts and believed none which I asserted. For my part, they thought it absurd that I should pretend to know anything about the subject which they did not know,—a *Gefangener* being a sort of benighted heathen.

I sounded their ignorance, however, rather pointedly one evening. We were seated at the supper-table and I found myself hotly assailed not only by the five members of the household but a visiting aunt and uncle as well.

"Germany is bigger than all the Allies put together," announced Auntie. "I don't see what you all keep fighting for!"

"What *is* the population of Germany?" I repeated.

They did not quite hear me.

"What *is* the population of Germany?" I repeated.

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[6] Beaten.

[7] Mecklenburgish, *Ne;* German, *Nein;* English, No.

I was looking at Auntie, but she was looking at somebody else and they were all looking about as though they had lost something. Then someone called on *Mutter*[7a] to save the situation.

"Yes, *Mutter* knows!" they said.

Mutter suddenly decided to go into the kitchen for some more potatoes, but she was trapped by Erna.

"Tell him, *Mutter,*" she urged.

Mutter paused a moment and then:

"Joachim can tell you all right when he comes on leave!" she exclaimed triumphantly as she went out of the door.

The Central Powers were winning again.

"Yes, and we've lots more hand grenades and things than you all!" gloated Auntie.

"How many hand grenades?" I asked again statistically.

"Oh, hundreds of them!" she replied.

"Just how many soldiers have the Germans got?" I inquired a few minutes later.

It was Erna who volunteered to reply.

"I know exactly. My brother told me and he's an *Unteroffizier!* We've six thousand and the English only three thousand! Twice as many! Why, he saw two hundred soldiers in one town!"

This quite put the cap on it. It put an end, anyway, to any serious discussion of the matter on my part. But talk I must, and not wishing to see the name of England writhing in the dust, I tried to adopt myself to the peasant style of argument. About a month thereafter you might have found me entertaining my German companions in the fields in this wise:

"Ha, Ha! We laugh at the Germans in London! We spit on them—the monkeys! You're fine *Kerls*—you black bread eaters, you cherry-leaf smokers, you wooden-shoed pigs! Wouldn't you look fine on the Paris boulevard *in those? Was? Ach,* we spit on the Germans! *Passe mal auf, die Engländer* are coming, and they shoot—So—and the Germans will run—So—*Ja,* you're *schön dumm,* you are!"

[7a] Mother.

CHAPTER IX

The Russian Peace

"Oh, Ben, have you seen the papers?" asked Erna one day as I came in for *Kaffeetrinken.* "Peace has been declared!—Peace!"

"Was?" I asked, dumbfounded.

"Peace! Peace has been declared! The Russians have made peace!"

"Oh!" I sighed, my hopes dashed to the ground. "I've heard that before."

"Ja, but it is true," corroborated *Mutter.* "It's real peace! It's the beginning of the end. It'll all be settled now in a few weeks! Hostilities on the Eastern Front have ceased. There it is in the paper."

She handed me the *Rostocker Anzeiger* and they watched me while I read the story of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They expected me to dance with glee at the joyous news and were keenly disappointed when I failed to share their elation.

"Aren't you glad?" asked *Mutter,* "It's peace! Peace!"

"No," I said. "It's war, worse war and more of it!"

I read the paper with no little interest for the next few days, glowing and optimistic and especially conciliatory toward the vanquished Russians. The Russians were naturally clever and amiable people, who had simply been the unfortunate dupes of wicked England. The hand of friendship was again to be extended to the Slavonic brethren, and all animosities inspired by the war were to be forgotten. Indeed, it severely pained the tender heart of the Germans that they had been compelled to kill so many Russians, and they fervently prayed that no misunderstanding would ever again arise between the great German and Russian races.

No reference was made to the treatment of the Russian prisoners, for—there it stood in the treaty—they were to be "repatriated with all possible speed!"

The helpless Russian *Gefangener,* however, already the

most brutally treated of the prisoners, were from that day reduced to a more abject and wretched slavery than ever before. Cut off from all outside help and with no government at home capable of protesting, they were absolutely at the mercy of their German masters. They were overworked and whipped or slashed or imprisoned whenever it pleased any particular German to do so. In the camps and on the big working *Komandos,* they begged, thieved, waited on the other prisoners for their food, or else—starved.

The repatriation clause keenly interested the Russians in Kossebade. The evening after the news came they gathered in joyous groups in the village square and sang songs and congratulated one another.

A German farmer saw me watching them.

"Don't you wish England had made peace," he asked, "so *you* could go home, too!"

For weeks afterward the Russians talked confidently of going home. "When are you going home?" was the usual greeting when we met one of them.

"Don't know, but soon!" was the reply.

Some months later I met my old neighbor, Ivan, now nearly four years in captivity. We were ploughing two adjoining fields.

"When are you going home, Ivan?" I asked jocularly. It was the first time that I had referred to it for a long time.

"I don't know," he answered smiling sadly, "I think mine is a life sentence!"

When at last the armistice was signed and the French and Belgians and all the rest of us were leaving, poor old Ivan was still there, and so were his thirty-four comrades—still going wearily through the routine of toil for their German masters, and playing *Einundzwanzig* on Sundays! The day of departure had passed into that realm of sweet, but distant hope to which the Millenium belongs.

CHAPTER X

German Lovers

I was cleaning up in the stable one day when Miga rushed in with a telegram in her hand.

"Ben, Ben!" she exclaimed, quaking with excitement. "Karl is coming today!"

Who Karl was or what the matter had to do with me I couldn't imagine. "Where is Warner?" she asked.

I told her, and she rushed out to find him. Evidently it was something which everybody had to know. I was interested. I rather liked Miga. She had travelled a bit, and I put her down easily the most intelligent member of the household. But who was Karl?

I soon had an opportunity of learning, for the boy August came in.

"Don't you know," he said winking. "That's her beau!"

In due course Karl arrived, a smart young sergeant from a Dragoon regiment. He spent two days with us and though he was almost constantly with Miga, he frequently found time to joke with me about the mud on the Somme, soldiers' fondness for beer, the capitalist bandits, et cetera; giving me a cigarette on each occasion. Like most soldiers from the front, he had less of the air of superiority toward prisoners of war than the civilians. He regarded the war as simply a rotten business for all parties concerned and avoided talking seriously on any topic.

For Miga it was a happy two days. The night before his departure, he went out to say goodbye to some friends, and she broke into tears.

"Silly, ain't it?" observed Erna to me grinning, as Miga went weeping to her bedroom.

Miga drove with him to the station the next morning and we all turned out to see them off.

"Give my regards to my brother," I said, "if you meet him on the Somme."

"Ja wohl!" he answered laughing, "I'll fetch him over to keep you company."

He shook hands with everybody else and exchanged salutes with me. We watched them drive away, and *Mutter* stood silently at the gate long after the trap had vanished in the distance.

I saw no more of Miga after she returned until the next afternoon—she was confined to her bed with lovesickness. It was *Kaffeetrinken* time when she appeared again at the table. Her eyes were red and her cheeks were swollen. She ate in silence until the rest had left the table, and then waited to speak to me.

"What makes you men fight?" she asked slowly, gazing out of the window. "Isn't it horrible!"

"Ja," I agreed, "Horrible beyond all words."

"He might be killed! How cruel the *Engländer* must be to kill such boys as Karl. Don't you think it is cruel—cruel—cruel?

"War is cruel," I conceded. It was useless to start an argument. "But he's been through three years of it all right, so why are you worrying now? Besides, the war is bound to end soon," I added hopefully.

"Why didn't *you* go and let him stay with me?" she demanded, clutching at a childish idea. "You always say that you would rather be back there fighting than here. What horrible mistakes the *lieber Gott* makes! Why don't you go and fight in his stead and send him back to me?"

"I should hardly care to fight in his *stead,* Fraulein," I said. I could not give her any comfort so I arose and went out, leaving her staring blankly out of the window.

She took me somewhat into her confidence after that, and often read me letters from Karl. The first letter found him at a reinforcement camp near Bruges.

"Pray God he stops there," she said.

But he didn't; for the end of March found him writing letters like this: "We have crossed the Marne! Peace and victory are in sight. We go forward with God!"

"Isn't it noble!" Miga said.

CHAPTER XI

Free for Three Days

At last one summer's evening they gathered around the supper table and Ben failed to appear. I would give worlds to have seen the expressions on their faces then, and on the sentry's later when he came and found no *Engländer* there to lock up. I had come to seem too permanent there! I was as much an institution on the place as the dog, Telo, or the broken pump.

While they were making these rude discoveries I lay crouched on a bed of moss in a secluded dell in one of the grand duke's forests smoking my pipe and speculating as to whether another fortnight would find me in Denmark or in a German jail. I had just finished a good supper of bread, "bully," condensed milk, and dates from my box of English provisions and was resting a moment before going on.

My linen collar wilted with perspiration and I threw it away, having plenty more in my bag to put on in the morning. I had spent most of the afternoon in putting together my civilian attire, for I had to escape from the village in my prisoner's garb. I carried patches of black cloth in my pockets, accurately cut out to fit the prisoner's stripes on my cap and trousers. These I sewed on in the midst of a rye field immediately I got clear of the village. My coat, I had found, would not admit of alteration, so I had contrived to get another. I walked into the little room adjoining the barn, belonging to Warner, the old care-taker, and selecting the best of the coats hanging there, a gay cream-colored creation, I put it on under my black one. Then I put two suits of my new English underwear in a parcel under his bed, for I did not care to steal from Warner. He had seen me thrash a German boy without reporting it and had befriended me on various occasions. On top of the parcel I scribbled a note:

"Dear Warner:

"This underwear is in exchange for your coat which I must take with me. *Danke schön. Auf Wiedersehen!*

Ben."

I spent most of the time tramping, stopping when tired or when the view pleased me, for a rest, and sleeping in the middle of the day. I passed through numerous villages and towns whose names I usually learned from the mile-posts along the road. These were about ten feet high and at night I had to climb up them and hold my eyes close to the board to read the inscription. It was the first time I had spent the night outside of my cell for many months and I enjoyed the sight of the moon and the stars again. The long North German twilight was glorious, too, and I often lay on some hillside above the fields and meadows and villages, and watched it while I rested.

I was seldom accosted. I nearly ran into an old gentleman in a forest on one occasion, however. He was a thin, academic-looking old chap, wearing classes and a frock coat, and carrying a cane. What brought him to the forest at that unseemly hour I have never been able to imagine. It was just after midnight and the darkness was so dense that we could neither of us see the other until we were within a few inches proximity, and the mossy earth so effectually concealed the sound of our foosteps that we narrowly averted a collision.

"Donnerwetter!"[7b] he screamed in a squeaky voice, throwing up his hands and dropping his cane.

I was startled too, but finding him quite harmless, I bade him: *"Guten Abend!"*[7c] and, laughing, walked on.

Everywhere through this farming country I saw prisoners of war at work, often more numerous than the German laborers. Like faithful slaves in the small farmyards or like gangs of convicts on the big estates, they carried on constantly the work of the absent German men and tilled Ger-

[7b] Exclamation about equal to "Good Heavens!"
[7c] Good evening.

many's soil. With dull and hardened faces and uniforms stained and patched until Cossack was scarcely distinguishable from *chasseur,* they drudged wearily on.

I was arrested by an animated scene on the rye fields of a big estate. About thirty English, French, and Russian prisoners with a sprinkling of Polish girls were harvesting and threshing the rye. The sun was scorching hot, and their faces were black with dust and perspiration as they bent over the big, relentless machine. The sole German on the scene, a fat sentry, was sitting on a bench in the shade of a tree, sipping a glass of beer!

CHAPTER XII

I Encounter a Don Quixote and Fall a Victim to His Prowess

The success which I seemed to have with my civilian disguise gradually led me to assume a bolder attitude. I began to stroll nonchalantly along the main roads and even entered public houses and tobacco shops, buying cigars and bottles of beer to drink with my meals. It was this boldness which later caused my downfall.

It was the afternoon of the third day and I was resting beside that fateful thoroughfare which runs from the village of Alt Pokrent to the town of Gadebusch, when one of those dazzling creatures which belonged to the mounted German *Landpolizei* road up. I had passed two of them during the day without attracting any special attention, so I hoped to be able to ignore this one and coolly lit a cigar.

I was looking the other way, but I heard tremulously as he drew up his horse. I thought of flight, but a high bank stared me in the face. I glanced timidly around. He was curling his mustache and gazing at my feet.

"Guten Abend," he began politely.

I wished him a *"Guten Abend."*

Privately I wished him many other things.

"Are you—er—a traveller?" he began slowly.

"Nein, I am only going as far as Gadebusch."

"Where is your home?"

"In Alt Pokrent," I answered promptly.

Then he fired questions at me with bewildering rapidity.

"Work there?"

"Ja."

"On the estate?"

"Ja."

"Since when?"

"Seven months ago."

"Cutting house or horses?"

"Horses."

"Who owns the estate?"

I paused a moment and then thought of a Kossebade name.

"Herr Gottschalk."

"Who's the inspector?"

"Herr Warner."

Then dramatically—*"Where did you get those boots?"*

I looked sheepishly at my tell-tale English boots—better than any to be had in Germany.

"I bought them from——"

"Ja, ja!" he broke in. "We know all about that. They're English boots and the English don't give boots to Germans. You told me a *schön* tale! I know every man, woman and child in Alt Pokrent. You're a Pole or else an escaped Russian. Stand up! Stop smoking and take off your coat!"

I obeyed and gave him Warner's cream-colored coat. Not in the pocket but in the lining, he found my wallet with a collection of keepsakes, including a photo of a French *poilu,* a small American flag, and my English Certificate of Attestation. He was quite puzzled.

"I don't know," he soliloquized, curling his mustache again. "You're something on the wrong side of the war. I am going to hold you for an escaped prisoner. It will be better for you to tell me the truth."

Convinced of his determination, I told him my story, and he took it down in a little note-book.

"I don't blame you, *Junger,"* he said. "I know what it is to be homesick, but why don't you English come to your senses and stop fighting us?"

It is my firm belief that the natives of Gadebusch had proclaimed a holiday in honor of my capture, for they were all standing out on the sidewalks when we entered, my humble self trudging along in front with my box of provisions and this gallant knight errant following, mounted on his black charger and armed to the teeth. Sword, spurs, revolvers, harness, and mustache were all polished to the highest degree. Indeed he reminded me of a sort of Don Quixote as he glared fiercely from side to side and replied majestically

to the queries of the multitude in regard to my nationality with: *"Engländer!"*

In short, his pose suggested that unanswerable question: "Why should Germany tremble?"

I quite enjoyed the fun and grinned and stared brazenly back at the Gadebuschers. My *gendarme* was apparently bent on giving them all a good look at me, for he marched me up one street and down another until we had pretty well covered the town.

We ended up at the town jail; a charming old structure, overlooking from the ground-floor, a pig-pen, and from the upper stories, the ramshackle roofs of sundry adjacent houses. The landlord thoughtfully relieved me of my burden of provisions as I entered and assigned me to a cell on the second floor.

CHAPTER XIII

My Entertainment at Gadebusch

I hope I make an unchallenged assertion when I say that it was my first visit inside a civilian jail. It was, at all events, an experience which I do not wish to repeat. At first I worried through a few hours examining the pictures and names carved on the walls. This exciting pastime exhausted, I divided the remaining time between singing and reading the old German Bible, which I found on the shelf, beginning with first chapter of Genesis. My singing, too, was restricted to a *sotto voce* the second day when a voice from outside the door shouted:

"Nicht singen! Nicht singen! Das geht nicht!" But I think this prohibition was due less to the rules and traditions of the institution than to the peculiar quality of my singing.

Three times a day the old warden came in with a hunk of my bread, a slice of my bacon, and a cup of German coffee. It was a concession, he explained. I should have gotten only the coffee, but he had a son who had formerly worked in England! It was lavish fare for this prison at any rate, for several times every day one of the other prisoners appeared at the little peep-hole in my door and begged:

"Brot, Brot, Kamarad! Just a little crumb of *Brot!"*

I was not a little curious to learn what manner of men my comrades in misery were. I was accordingly pleased the second night when I gained an opportunity of improving our acquaintance. I was slumbering peacefully on my downy couch when I felt myself being roughly shaken, and a voice:

"Engländer! Engländer!"

It was my kind old warden.

"Kom darunter—Blitzen!"[8]

I obeyed him, wondering, slipping on my trousers and going downstairs. I found my fellow prisoners to be two emaciated, but still professional looking gentlemen of the underworld. The hall clock was striking two. Having gone

[8] Come down—lightning.

through the usual social amenities, I sought to learn what object our gaoler had, beyond a general get-together meeting of the inmates, in disturbing our repose at this unwonted hour.

"*Ach,*" explained one of them, who was hunchbacked, "That's on account of the lightning!"

We listened a few minutes until we heard a rumble of thunder.

"*Da!*" he exclaimed, "you see it might strike the jail, and if we were all up in the cells we would die like rats!"

It struck me as a novel, but, I agreed, doubtless quite a wise precaution.

I learned further that we three were all the prisoners. The twenty-seven empty cells were a testimonial to the shattering effect of the war on "business." My companions were serving a sentence of eight months for a robbery committed in the town.

"We don't any of us belong to Mecklenburg," observed the hunchback pleasantly. "You see, my mate's an Austrian, I'm an East Prussian, and you're an *Engländer,* so we're sort of *Kamaraden,* aren't we?"

"How jolly!" I thought.

A pause ensued, allowing us to hear the whistle of a locomotive and the distant rumbling of a train coming around the bend—which bend I will not say, for the sake of neutrality.

"*Da,*" murmured the hunchback pointing toward the door, "There comes the old choo-choo!"

"There?" objected the Austrian aghast. He pointed toward the clock. "That's the way the train comes in. You're forgetting yourself."

"*Was?*" exclaimed the hunchback on the defensive. "I know where the track lies—I came in that way. It's just over there," pointing again at the door, "back of the pond."

"Are you mad, *Mench?*"[9] retorted the Austrian, pointing again at the clock, "Didn't you just hear it come in *that* way?"

[9] Man.

Then followed one of the hottest little debates which I have ever heard. Both men grew into a frenzy, and only the ties of long friendship—constantly emphasized by the hunchback—prevented a resort to physical force. When the old warden came in half an hour later to tell us that danger was past, he found them stretched out together, haggling over a map of Gadebusch, drawn with string and bits of paper on the floor, a match stick representing the train. When I finally went up to my cell, I could still hear the disgusted voice of the hunchback:

"*Aber,*[10] they don't run locomotives over rye fields, *mein Lieber!*"[11]

It was about noon of the fifth day and I was finishing the Book of Isaiah, when the guard came to take me away. My warden did not forget to exact a fee of six marks—being the amount of my hotel bill for the five days, at a mark a day, according to Gadebusch reckoning.

[10] But.
[11] My dear fellow.

CHAPTER XIV

Kultur in a Train

My new custodian was a fat, easy-going German, whom I found possessed some of the most radical of revolutionary ideas, but like a vast number of his comrades, too apathetic to trouble about carrying them out. We passed a little display of wealth in the form of a smartly dressed gentleman, lady, child and poodle dog, strolling down the street.

"They're the bandits!" said my guard, nudging me. "They eat the butter and eggs. We have to fight on dry bread and potatoes!"

It was through him, too, that I first learned of Marshal Foch's great offensive, though it was too young as yet to bring to us prisoners the Great Hope. We were seated in the corner of a *Gastwirtschaft* talking over glasses of wine (for which he paid). The gramophone was playing: *"Puppchen, du bist mein Augenschatz,"* or the German "Tipperary." He leaned over as if about to divulge a great secret.

"Deutschland ist kaput!"[12]

"Was?" I asked, astonished at the admission, for the German newspapers had never been more optimistic than during the last month.

"Deutschland ist kaput—kaput," he repeated, "absolutely *tot!*[13] The soldiers will turn against the bandits soon, for they are starving! The food is finished—absolutely finished. We have *nichts—nichts—nichts!"*[14] and he put his thumbs together and jerked them quickly apart as though breaking a string.

"Ja," I agreed, "but the offensive?" for the papers were still gloating over the March success.

"The offensive?" he went on, *"Ach,* the offensive is doing splendidly! They've captured fifty thousand prisoners!

---

[12] Germany is beaten.
[13] Dead.
[14] Nothing.

They're going *immer fester d'rauf!"* and he beat himself on the chest in illustration. *"Ach, Lieber,* it'll soon be over now!"

"I thought you'd captured one hundred and twenty thousand prisoners," I protested, puzzled.

"Ach," exclaimed the guard, "This isn't *us,* it's the *French!"*

We had three hours to wait for our train, so he took me for a stroll around Gadebusch. We visited two ladies who had sons in English and French imprisonment. Both of them talked kindly to me and said that their sons wrote pleasing accounts of their treatment at the hands of the enemy. Later he took me to see another English prisoner in a private home. It was a joy to meet him and speak the language again, exchanging the stories of our varied adventures. He was "all right" there, enjoying the privileges of a favored slave in the home, valued by his master and loved by the children, for whom his broken German was a source of never-ending amusement.

"Well, what are you going to do with him?" asked his master jocularly of my guard.

"Don't you want another *Engländer,* Annie?" he asked, turning to the oldest girl.

"Ja, Ja!" shouted both the children at once.

Finding me agreeable, the old man and the guard immediately framed a letter to the *Komandatur* asking for my return to Gadebusch, when my punishment was over.

We took a third class passage back to the camp at Parchim. It was one of those long carriages with seats along the sides like a tram. A large crowd boarded the train at Gadebusch, but we got in among the first and managed to get seats. When the guard announced my nationality, I promptly became the cynosure of neighboring eyes and the object of innumerable questions, which he obligingly answered.

At the next station we received another influx of passengers, including a number of females, the scarcity of the seats and the preoccupation of the gentlemen occupying them forcing the latter to stand. This gave me the opportunity

for a cheap triumph, lessened somewhat by the fact that there was no one beside myself to enjoy it.

I arose gallantly and grasped a strap.

"In England," I said loud enough to be heard throughout the carriage, "the men are glad enough to *stand* when there are *ladies* without seats!"

I was the cynosure of piercing glares, but after an awkward pause, the men of the "superior" race began one by one to follow my example.

I grinned inwardly, but my outward mien preserved the due humility of a *Kriegsgefangener,* and my eyes rested on the distant fields.

CHAPTER XV

"Mad Alek" and "Good Paul"

In the future annals of the war, one Acting Sergeant Major, Alexander Schröder, chef of *III Kompanie,* Parchim *Gefangenenlager,* better known to the Englishmen as "'Mad Alek," deserves a large but ignominious chapter. His ludicrous air of blood-curdling bravado and his childish efforts to play the role of the Chocolate Soldier make him as laughable as his brutish cruelties made him an object of dread and hate to the thousands of prisoners who passed through his hands.

We runaways, nine in number, were lined up in the *Büro* to give up our valuables before entering the Arrest Barracks, when this creature swaggered in. He cut a dashing figure with the air of a champion in feats of arms—*gained from combats with helpless prisoners*—and a pair of polished spurs, a clanking sword and a fiercely up-turned mustacche completed the picture. Every prisoner and German sprang to attention.

"What are these?" he demanded, pointing at us.

"Runaways, sir?" ventured someone timidly.

"Was? Was? Runaways?" Then began a thrilling oration, illustrated with the drawn sword, on the wretchedness and depravity of us all and of all the foul races from whence we sprang.

"This man," said the *Unteroffizier* humbly, pointing at a Russian, "has a complaint to make."

With a trembling hand the Russian presented a letter signed by a German lady. She testified to the brutal treatment which the prisoner had suffered at the hands of his master, driving him to desperation and flight.

"He *beat* you, did he?" sneered "Mad Alek," aroused to fury again. "I wouldn't have beaten you—not me! I wouldn't have *beaten* you. I would have *killed* you!" and he went through the movement with his sword—"for the surly swine you are!"

The right to demand a writ of Habeas Corpus was never

observed in a German prison camp. Offenders were thrown into the arrest barrack and began the *Hungerstraf* immediately a complaint was lodged and trial awaited the casual convenience of the officer of justice.

The *Hungerstraf* I found to consist of confinement to a bedless and fireless barrack on a diet of pure and undiluted water. There were no other Englishmen there at the time, but I met a Belgian who kept me agreeable company. He had been four days at large, sleeping, as he said, in the haystacks, and making for Warnemünde where he had hoped to board a Danish ship. He was a '14 prisoner and had attempted escape many times before. He seemed but a youth with the smooth face of a girl, but he knew all the tortures of German captivity at its worst.

"I only want to get back and fight again," he said bitterly. "I shall run away again and again until I succeed, or die—or peace is declared!"

I was not long, however, in discovering some English neighbors. They were in the Work Barrack, which adjoined ours, and to which we would be conducted after forty-eight hours of fasting.

I was lying down composing the tentative menu for One Grand Feast when I should be restored to freedom (as all men do when they are suffering from hunger), when I heard a cheery voice:

"Any *Engländer* there?"

"Any *Engländer* there?" it came again.

"Yes, mate," I shouted, and followed the voice to a knothole in the wall, "K. R. R."

"I'm Australian. How're you getting on? Say, turn your stove around, lad, and put your arm up to the chimney. I've some soup for you!"

I made haste to do as I was told.

"That's right, Jack, right around. Now, get this!"

One chimney served for the stoves in both rooms, and by turning his own stove around, he was able to get his arm through and pass me a "bully" tin full of soup. It was

rotten stuff, and mixed with soot from the chimney but at the moment, it was better than the food of the gods.

"Good Old Auzzie!" I said fervently.

The next day I was carried before the officer of justice for trial. Finding that I spoke German he dismissed the interpreter and as usual in the case of prisoners with an appearance of education, gave me a painstaking hearing. He wished not only to know the details of my flight, but what college I had attended, what studies I had pursued, and my general life story.

"You have broken German martial law," he said gravely, in conclusion, "and must be punished, but I shall make it light. I give you seven days' arrest."

"But what about the seven I have already done?" I broke in.

"Ach, that wasn't punishment," he explained, "that was *hospitality!* We couldn't leave you in the street, you know. Seven days arrest," he continued, "subject to reduction to two on report of good conduct. You will be sent back to the farm, and if you repeat this nonsense, I shall deal severely with you. On the other hand, you may be assured of good treatment until the end of the war—if you *do your duty!*"

"My duty!" I exclaimed. "My *duty, Herr Leutnant,* would be to poison all the horses and set fire to the barns."

He dismissed me laughing.

"Das ist ja Krieg!"[15] was his only comment.

The proposed return to Gadebusch had evidently fallen through. I completed the *Hungerstraf* and afterward spent a few extra days in the work barrack before the guard came to take me back to the farm. The ration in the work barrack differed from that in the *Hungerstraf* in that they mixed a few carrots and potatoes with the water and called it soup. At all events it was calculated to give us the stamina necessary for work.

We were marching out to work one afternoon when I was

[15] That is indeed war.

astonished to see one of the Frenchmen in the party run up to the guard and embrace him affectionately.

"C'est toi, Paul!"[16]

"François! Mon vieux!"[17]

But I recognized the guard and my astonishment was removed. It was indeed Paul. "Good Paul," as the Russians called him, a French-Alsatian, as well known to the habitues of the detention barracks as "Mad Alek" and as cordially loved as the latter was hated. He had contrived to stay in the prison camp since the outbreak of the war with the one object of smoothing the jagged edges of captivity for Allied prisoners. Neither daily abuses from his German comrades nor the constant risk of punishment for himself had deterred him. Many a man will remember him gratefully for a timely rescue from wretched, gnawing hunger, many a man owes his escape from a Komando, which would have been equivalent to a death sentence to him, and the despondent hearts which have been warmed by a friendly word and a handshake from Paul would be difficult to estimate.

We had the job of loading peat on the trucks behind the camp. After loading one truck, Paul, having explored the scene for official eyes in the meantime, put François on sentry.

"You look out for *Unterofficieren,*" he directed, and turning to the rest of us, "Sit down on the peat baskets," he said. "Here are cigarettes for some of you. And don't any one work until I tell you!"

"Is there anyone here," he asked presently, knowing our hunger, "who has friends in the cage with food?"

"Ja," replied a Serbian and I.

"Swap coats," he said, "in case any of the guards know you, and push that truck in the gate."

I enjoyed a good tea with a sergeant of my regiment and we both returned with pockets bulging with food, which we divided with our comrades.

We were all warmly grateful to Paul.

[16] It is you, Paul.

[17] François, my Old Mate!

"That's only my business here," he said, pleased.

Whatever else may be done at the Peace Conference, I want the Allies to make a search of Germany and Alsace-Lorraine until they find one Paul Sanchez formerly attached to *X Kompanie, Ersatz Battalion* of the German Army—a little man with a blonde mustache, and a kindly face—and give him a Victoria Cross!

CHAPTER XVI

The World Turned Upsidedown

I will detain you little with my life on my second German farm, for I was sent to a different one. One coincidence should be noted, however, the lady for whom I now worked had a brother in England, captured near Cambrai in the same battle in which I fell into German hands! This did not alter her attitude toward me, and my treatment here was worse than on the first farm.

My sentence of seven days' arrest was to consist of seven consecutive Sundays of confinement in my room, in the attic, without food. What occasion I gave them for a report of good conduct I don't know, but the seven days were mercifully reduced to two. Having a liberal supply of newspapers, tobacco and food concealed in my room and the German serving girl bravely passing me jugs of hot coffee by means of a string dropped from the window, I spent these two days quite pleasantly.

It was during my detention that I learned of great success of our offensive and the probability of an early crash in Germany. From then on I read the newspapers with feverish interest whenever I could get them and made short translations on the backs of letters to be passed to other Englishmen in the village, and to the other villages. I grew restless and impatient as the rumors of capitulation and revolution became more insistent. I couldn't wait to read the papers. I longed to hear and see more of the great things which were happening in the world outside of our sleepy village.

At last I contrived to get as far as Parchim on the excuse of going for a bath. My sentry took me in the morning and brought me back in the afternoon.

On the train the passengers were talking excitedly, but in subdued tones lest I should hear. A telegram was passed down the carriage. The gentleman on my right carefully passed it *around* me to the gentleman on my left.

"For God's sake let me see it, *Kamarad!*" I begged.

"Nein. Es ist verboten."[18]

I studied the back of the paper as he held it up to read it and made out the word "Kaiser!"

"Bitte![19] *Bitte! Kamarad,"* I whispered, "is the Kaiser gone?"

"Not yet, but soon!" he replied.

The Parchim Railway station was heavily guarded by the Badgeless troops of the *Soldatenrat.*[20] In the camp I found the boys all merry and bright. The signing of the Armistice was daily expected. Repatriation by Christmas was conceived possible.

I gathered all the news I could from the English chaps in the baths. A new regime had come in the camp. All the officers and all the most notorious of the old bullies had fled, leaving the *Soldatenrat* in control.

"They found 'Mad Alek,'" he announced.

"Found him?" I asked puzzled.

"Yes, he beat it, you know. Disappeared when they heard Bulgaria had chucked it—took most of the garrison funds with him. They found him last week in a forest near the Danish frontier. He'd hung himself."

I returned to my farm, resolved to submit to no more restrictions, if indeed to work at all. I could not help taunting my sentry and all my favorite enemies in the village (who had so long jeered at me) over Germany's debacle. They had always regarded me as a "Smart Alek" and now I exasperated them delightfully. My relations with the sentry reached a climax one evening when he found me reading a newspaper by candle-light in the barn.

"Das ist verboten!" he commanded.

"Who told you that, *mein Lieber?*" I asked, grinning condescendingly.

"Laugh at me will you? You swine!" He roared and before I was aware he struck me a blow in the chest that

[18] It is forbidden.
[19] Please.
[20] Council of soldiers.

sent me reeling. Aghast and indignant I started back at him. Quick as a flash he had drawn his bayonet and he struck my arm threateningly with the flat of it.

"Go to bed, you swine!" he ordered.

Confronted by cold steel, there was nothing to do but to obey. I climbed slowly upstairs to my room, the German close on my heels, striking me constantly with the bayonet to hurry me. I went to bed with that wretched and maddening feeling of a man who has received blows which he cannot repay. I could not sleep. I got up and sat down and smoked until they unlocked my door in the morning.

I resolved to go to Parchim the next day and seek redress from the revolutionaries. I would see if the justice of which they prated was a reality. I had to wait until dusk, for flight was still *verboten,* and I must escape unobserved. Setting out in my English uniform with my buttons brightly polished and

carrying my belongings in a neat little German haversack, I walked all the fifteen kilometers to Parchim, arriving in the *Komandatur* at about eight o'clock. I found all young boys from the new movement in charge, and they listened to my story with sympathetic indignation. I could not however, see the officer of justice until the day after tomorrow, and being a runaway, I must spend the remaining time in the detention barrack.

In this old house of misery I found every evidence of the "New Order." The *Hungerstraf* had been abolished. I was permitted to keep my cigarettes and tobacco. In the morning the guard asked me for the address of a friend in the camp, and went out, returning with a cup of hot tea and a generous meal! He repeated this performance three times a day.

The new officer of justice was a studious looking young man from the *Soldatenrat*. The point of my having run away he magnanimously waived, and he carefully took down my charges against the sentry in a big book. He promised me complete satisfaction.

"But when is this trial going to come off?" I asked, anxious to see it through myself. "I want to be there and testify against him to his face."

"I am sorry," he apologized, "but this matter must be referred to the *Soldatenrat*. Your assailant will be arrested and the matter thoroughly investigated, but it will take time. See me in a fortnight and I will give you a good report of what has been done.

"I hope to be in England in a fortnight," I said resignedly, "so I must trust you to see justice done."

CHAPTER XVII

"Auf Wiedersehen"

A fortnight later found us in Warnemünde, awaiting embarkation. We were quartered in the luxurious Naval Flying Corps Barracks, and living on the fat of the land, but chafing and impatient for the old "Blighty" ship. The natives of Warnemünde were obsequiously polite to the *Engländer* now. I was returning one evening to the *Flugplatz* when I was overtaken by a kindly-looking old lady.

"*Guten Abend, Junger,*" she said, smiling pleasantly. They say you're leaving tomorrow. I suppose you're glad you are are going home?"

I told her I was.

"My boys will never come again," she went on sadly, and she told me about her three sons which she had sacrificed for the Fatherland.

"Now the nightmare is over," she sighed, "and *Deutschland liegt unter!*"[21]

Finally, as she grasped my hand before turning down another street:

"Tell them to be merciful on us," she said. "Goodbye, and *bon voyage!*"

True enough the next day we marched down overloaded with kit and souvenirs to board the ship and bade a final *"Auf Wiedersehen"* to the Land of Captivity. Happy and excited we greeted the ship as a Goddess of Liberty come to take us to a better land. Laughing and singing were the order and with the unfailing humor of Tommy Atkins as we mounted the gangplank arose the familiar strains of:

" . . . For this is the end of a Perfect Day."

THE END

[21] Germany lies under (Germany is vanquished).